

HARLEM RENAISSANCE

New York in the Twenties



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Cover: James Van Der Zee, *Portrait of Couple, Man with Walking Stick*. 1929
Silver print. The James Van Der Zee Collection. This studio portrait is enhanced
by the use of a backdrop painted to resemble the English countryside

HUMANITIES WEST

«exploring history to celebrate the mind and the arts»

presents

HARLEM RENAISSANCE: *New York in the Twenties*

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February 9 and 10, 1996

Herbst Theatre, San Francisco

Presented in cooperation with The African-American Historical Society, The Oakland Links, The Oakland Museum, and the San Francisco Traditional Jazz Foundation

The Friday portion of this program is generously supported by the Berkeley Bay Area, Oakland East Bay, Palo Alto, San Francisco Peninsula, San Jose, and Vallejo Alumnae Chapters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

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HUMANITIES WEST PRESENTS HARLEM RENAISSANCE: NEW YORK IN THE TWENTIES

Herbst Theatre, *San Francisco*

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1996, 8:00–10:15 PM

MODERATOR: BARBARA CHRISTIAN, *University of California, Berkeley*

8:00 PM *Lecture: "HARLEM RENAISSANCE: THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FABRIC OF AN ERA"*

DONNA AKIBA SULLIVAN HARPER, *Spelman College*

This illustrated lecture will examine the forces that led to the flowering of black writers, performers and visual artists in the 1920s. Out of a prosperous, stylish Harlem the "New Negro" arose to participate in the nationwide vitality of the twenties.

9:00 PM *Musical performance: "TEN YEARS OF THE COTTON CLUB"*

BILL BELL, BAND LEADER; MARGIE BAKER, VOCALIST; PEEWEE CLAYBROOK, TENOR SAX SOLOIST.

The all-star jazz orchestra assembled for tonight's celebration of the Harlem Renaissance period reflects the instrumentation of the Duke Ellington bands of the 1920s: six brass, four saxophones, and three rhythm players. The effort here is to take the audience back to the time when big band jazz was the popular music of the day. Radio and phonograph recordings, as well as the movie industry, featured this familiar sound. This was the sound that inspired the Charleston, the Black Bottom, the two-step, the jitter bug and other popular dances. This program features the compositions of Duke Ellington and his close associate Billy Strayhorn. While it is important to note that contemporary band leaders Fletcher Henderson and Jimmy Lunceford were important contributors to the music of this era, it is widely accepted that Duke Ellington and his Cotton Club orchestra and review was the dominant force of the period.

COTTON TAIL

Duke Ellington

TRIBUTE TO THE DUKE MEDLEY

Arr. S. Nestico

(In a Sentimental Mood, Mood Indigo, It Don't Mean a Thing)

AIN'T NOBODY'S BUSINESS

Bessie Smith, Vocal Solo: Margie Baker

Other selections to be announced.

THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

Mercer Ellington

SOPHISTICATED LADY

Duke Ellington

Tenor Sax soloist PeeWee Claybrook

SQUEEZE ME

Duke Ellington

Tenor Sax soloist PeeWee Claybrook

CHELSEA BRIDGE

Billy Strayhorn, Arr. S. Nestico

SATIN DOLL

Duke Ellington, Arr. S. Nestico

ST. LOUIS BLUES

W. C. Handy

Solists Margie Baker, PeeWee Claybrook

Reception in the Green Room for members of the audience, speakers and performers, following the program.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10 10 AM–4:00 PM

MODERATOR: BELVA DAVIS, KRON-TV

10:00 AM *Lecture*: "THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN RENAISSANCE IN HARLEM:
CONTEXT AND MEANING"

DOUGLAS DANIELS, *University of California, Santa Barbara*

This lecture will consider the political and economic context of African-American urbanites in the 1920s. Professor Daniels will also explore the rich heritage which produced the Harlem Renaissance, including the cultural legacies of the American South, the West Indies, and Africa, as well as a variety of ideologies and social movements.

11:10 AM *Lecture*: "ENTER AND EXIT THE "NEW NEGRO"

RICHARD J. POWELL, *Duke University*

Roughly between 1919 and 1933, black culture took center stage in the development of a modernist aesthetic in the visual arts, especially in the United States and France. Artists like Aaron Douglas, Paul Colin, Archibald J. Motley, Jr., James Van Der Zee, Doris Ulmann, Sargent Johnson and countless others revised an earlier, more conservative representation of black people, and replaced it with something more streamlined, idealistic, progressive and, at times, provocative, primitive and expressionistic.

Although this period eventually came to be known as the "Harlem Renaissance," the visual artists, writers, musicians, critics, and other participants in this cultural moment more commonly referred to themselves as "New Negroes," and their creative times and endeavors as the "Negro Renaissance" and/or the "New Negro Arts Movement," a terminological and conceptual shift that will be discussed in this lecture, along with the circa 1933 shift — or "exit" — into another, more political frame of artistic reference. This lecture will also explore how the root concepts of the term "renaissance" were realized and redefined in African-American artistic circles in this period.

BREAK FOR LUNCH: 12:00–1:30 PM

1:30 PM *Musical Performance*

1:55 PM *Lecture*: " MUSIC IN THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE"

OLLY WILSON, *University of California, Berkeley*

Music held a central role in the artistic life of the Harlem Renaissance, whether it derived from the Western written tradition or from the African-Americans' rich oral and improvisational wellspring. Professor Wilson will explore the connection between musical and literary expression, particularly in the emergence and development of jazz and the blues.

3:00 PM Lecture: "AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITERS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE: SHAPING A LITERARY TRADITION"

BARBARA CHRISTIAN, *University of California, Berkeley*

This lecture will discuss the various points of view represented by major writers of the Harlem Renaissance, e.g. Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen and Zora Neale Hurston. The question as to what is a distinctly African-American literature engaged some of these writers, while others were more concerned with an increasingly industrialized America. Professor Christian will also discuss the works of a few contemporary African-American writers who have written about the Harlem Renaissance, in particular, Toni Morrison's recently published novel *Jazz* (1992).

HARLEM NIGHT SONG

by LANGSTON HUGHES

Come,
Let us roam the night together
Singing.

I love you.

Across
The Harlem roof-tops
Moon is shining.
Night sky is blue.
Stars are great drops
Of golden dew.

Down the street
A band is playing.

I love you.

Come,
Let us roam the night together
Singing.



James Van Der Zee.
Portrait of a Woman
Seated at Piano.
1931

SPEAKERS' AND MODERATORS' BIOGRAPHIES

HARLEM RENAISSANCE

BARBARA T. CHRISTIAN is Professor of African American Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. She is the author of *Black Women Novelists, the Development of a Tradition—1892-1976*, (1980) which won the Before Columbus American Book Award, and is the first book to explore black women novelists; *Black Feminist Criticism, Perspectives on Black Women Writers* (1985); and a Monarch Note on Alice Walker's "The Color Purple." (1988) She has also edited a casebook, *Alice Walker's "Everyday Use"* (1994). She has worked in curriculum development in the areas of Women's and African American Studies for the last 25 years and was a co-author of the prize-winning *In Search of Our Past: 6 Units for the Teaching of a Multi-Ethnic Women's History*. Prof. Christian has published over 50 essays in books and major African American and literary journals and has lectured at major universities in the U.S. and Europe. She is the contemporary editor of the first Norton Anthology of African American Literature, which will be published in 1996.

DOUGLAS H. DANIELS is a Professor in the Department of Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He received a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Chicago and a M.A. and Ph.D. in History from the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco*, and *Peoples of Color in the American West*. He is currently completing *Soul Sax: The Life and Times of Lester Young*.

BELVA DAVIS became the first African American woman television reporter on the West Coast in 1966 (for KPIX-TV). She joined KRON-TV in 1981, where, as NewsCenter 4's San Francisco urban affairs specialist, she covers topics ranging from political issues and fiscal concerns to city planning visions. She co-hosts "California This Week," KRON's Sunday morning public affairs program, and hosts "This Week in Northern California," a weekly news show on KOED-TV. Ms. Davis has covered many of the major news stories of the past two decades and has received several dozen awards.

DONNA AKIBA SULLIVAN HARPER, opening lecturer, is Associate Professor of English and Interim Chairperson of the Department of English at Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in American Studies from Emory University and her B.A. in English from Oberlin College. She is author of *Not So Simple*, editor of *The Return of Simple* by Langston Hughes, and President of the Langston Hughes Society.

RICHARD POWELL, Associate Professor of Art History at Duke University, has written and lectured extensively on art in the African diaspora. He received a B.A. degree from Morehouse College, a M.F.A. degree from Howard University, and M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees from Yale University. He has organized exhibitions featuring the works of African and African American artists for the Studio Museum in Harlem, Washington Project for the Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Whitney Museum of American Art, Addison Gallery of American Art, and Field Museum of Natural History, among many other museums and galleries. He is the author of numerous books and articles, including *The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism* (1989), *Homecoming: The Art and Life of William H. Johnson* (1991), *Jacob Lawrence* (1992), and the forthcoming *Black Culture and Art in the Twentieth Century* (Fall 1996, for Thames and Hudson's *World of Art* Series). Currently, Professor Powell is a 1995-96 Fellow at the National Humanities Center.

OLLY W. WILSON was educated at Washington University, St. Louis and received a Mus. M. degree from the University of Illinois and a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. He has held faculty positions at Florida A & M University and Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He is currently Chairman of the Department of Music at the University of California, Berkeley. His compositions include chamber and orchestral works and works for the electronic media. He received the 1968 Dartmouth Arts Council Prize for his composition *Cetus*. In 1995 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for composition and has been awarded commissions by the Koussevitzky Foundation in 1984, the Houston Symphony in 1986, the Chicago Symphony in 1994, and the New York Philharmonic in 1990.

FRIDAY EVENING PERFORMERS' BIOGRAPHIES

BILL BELL launched his West Coast teaching and professional career in 1963 after receiving a masters degree from the University of Iowa. He began working as pianist with vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery and singers Anita Oday, Lou Rawls and Nancy Wilson. In 1967 he was asked to train the chorus for Duke Ellington's "Sacred Concert." Known as the "Jazz Professor," Mr. Bell served as Jazz Band director and director of jazz performance at Stanford University from 1987 through 1991. He is currently Chairman of the Music Department at College of Alameda and is also adjunct professor of jazz improvisation at U.C. Berkeley. His newly released CD, *The Jazz Professor*, contains a collection of ten original compositions.

MARGIE BAKER, a San Francisco resident since the age of two, began a vocal career in 1972 when she began performing for the Hilton Hotel where she sang until 1986. She has performed with her mentor and friend, "Dizzy" Gillespie, at the Las Vegas Tender Trap, Yoshie's in Oakland, The Great American Music Hall in San Francisco and the Village Gate in New York. She has also performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival for the past five years and toured Japan in 1990 and 1992 with the Monterey Jazz Festival Allstars. The San Francisco Bay Area Council on Entertainment voted Dr. Baker the Outstanding Jazz/Blues Vocalist and Entertainer of the Year in 1988.

ELBERT "PEEWEE" CLAYBROOK began his career in St. Louis where he played with Eddie Randle's Blue Devils, Eddie Johnson's Cracker Jacks, and Dewey Jackson. In 1939 he played on the riverboats for several years and then joined the Great Lakes Navy Band, playing with Willie Smith, Gerald Wilson and Clark Terry. He has played with Earl Hines and many other great jazz musicians of his time. He is co-soloist on the new Clark Terry CD release, *Reunion*.

DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY

DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY was founded in 1913 by 22 students at Howard University. The sorority was founded in a college, by college women, for college women, and requires high scholastic achievement for membership. The membership is predominantly African-American. The Sorority is a private non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide services and programs to promote human welfare.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority is involved and committed to public service through its Five-Point Program Thrust. Through this program the members work to assist in eradicating educational, social and economic inequities. The five areas are:

- Economic development
- Educational development
- International awareness and involvement
- Physical and mental health
- Political awareness and involvement

These five areas are served through national projects and through the local chapter programs. The programmatic foci in the Five-Point Program Thrust are periodically assessed and revised, when appropriate, to address priority issues and the concerns of the Sorority overall.

The Delta Sigma Theta Commission on Arts and Letters was established in 1973. The Commission was established to begin a process of understanding and projecting the works of black women in the arts, to cherish their labor and their lives. Since 1913, Delta has maintained a commitment to literature and the creative and performing arts. One of the founders, Osceola Macarthy Adams, a distinguished actress, was Directress of the Harlem School of the Arts during the Depression. During the Harlem Renaissance, another member, Jessie Faucet, a prolific and leading writer of that period, left a distinguished legacy of black literature. From Dorothy Maynard to Leontyne Price, and, from Jessie Faucet to Nikki Giovanni, Deltas have been leaders in the arts.

Recognizing the need for enhancing the quality of life by providing experiences in the performing and visual arts and letters, the commission and chapters sponsor exhibitions and cultural programs on an ongoing basis. Currently, the commission's priority focus is aimed at highlighting the works and talents of black artists and writers via study and awareness projects, performances and gallery exhibitions.

JAZZ BANDS AS FAMILY AND SCHOOL

by DOUGLAS HENRY DANIELS

In recent years scholars have offered new interpretations to refute the familiar images of African Americans as pitiable individuals existing outside of stable family units. During slavery African Americans displayed considerable concern and affection for their children, siblings, relatives, and members of their community. Herbert Gutman has written about extended family units in *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*; in *Ain't I A Woman?*, Deborah White analyzed the solidarity among slave women, within and across generations, which enabled them to sustain, nurture, and educate one another and their children. After emancipation, the ex-slaves sought out family members, and couples prevented by law from marrying often did so.

Churches and fraternal organizations are also known to have insulated black Americans from the most pernicious effects of racism — whether it manifested itself within the institution of slavery or in the traditional ghettos of the twentieth century. Composer and band leader Duke Ellington's comments permitted the realization that jazz bands also fostered solidarity, promoted fraternity, and protected members, as well as dancers and fans, from the effects of the Depression. In a 1942 interview, Ellington contended that his band's success was due in a "great amount . . . to the fact that . . . [it] has always been not just a business venture but more of a fraternal organization where friendships are made and kept."*

Not only in the Ellington band, but in Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas, where a number of leading swing bands emerged and held sway during the 1930s, musicians behaved as if these territorial bands were quasi-families. Their intense loyalties and bonds of friendship insulated them from racism and sustained them during hard times on the road and in the towns and cities of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

To fully understand the family dimension to territorial bands, we need to realize that many black musicians started out in bands of actual family members. Bassist Gene Ramey and guitarist-trombonist Eddie Durham, both from central Texas, and tenor saxophonist Lester Young, who is associated with Kansas and

**Down Beat* (April 1, 1942), pg. 4.

Oklahoma cities, played with their siblings and cousins as children and as teenagers before leaving home. In new units, they tried to recreate that feeling of family which was so necessary for their survival and successes as bands. Ramey stressed the fact that the importance of family solidarity became embedded in musician's folklore. He referred to the adage, " 'If you can get that family relationship, you usually can get something going [musically].' " **

Tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate also started out in a family band in north Texas. He agreed with other musicians who found a tremendous sense of family unity in the Count Basie band during the swing era:

"It was really a family . . . the first band [1936-1944] . . . loved to be together off of the stage, off the stand, off the bus. We just got a big kick out of hanging together . . . we dug each other . . . We didn't have no animosity with each other." (Author's interview)

Problems among musicians did, of course, crop up from time to time, and Basie band members knew how to deal with such occurrences from years of experience: "If a guy wasn't cool, he stuck out like a sore thumb in that band. It wasn't long before he got in line. He didn't stay out of line very long."

Jo Jones, the Basie drummer for nearly twenty years, explained how the strong social bonds extended beyond band members to include citizens of the jazz community. This was particularly important for musicians who were away from home on the road for extended periods of time. Jones recalled: "When we're not there [at home] there's someone . . . back looking at your family." He explained, "we didn't have no baby-sitters then," but "whether it be the shoeshine boy . . . cab driver, . . . newspaperman . . . someone was always there to look in on our families, when we were in Keokuk, Iowa . . . Texas, or somewhere."

Jones's testimony indicated that even certain social classes expected to lack familial emotions and sensibilities behaved responsibly. "The boosters [shoplifters] was always there to steal something for our children." Band members reciprocated by playing the favorite songs of these fans. "All you have to do was play one chorus of 'These Foolish Things' and your family got their meat . . . their potatoes." Through reciprocity, band members and their fans protected one another from creditors about to repossess furniture and other necessities. Jones contended that when a member of the jazz community encountered difficulties with a salesman, gangsters would come into the club, request a

** Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from the Jazz Oral History Project interviews, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ and, in the case of the Young family, from the author's interviews.

tune, and go to the creditor and threaten "to blow . . . [that] old furniture place up."

Gene Ramey corroborated the idea and sentiment that considerable solidarity existed among those who might not come from nuclear families with regularly employed adults present. He stressed the fact that Basie's band fraternized with elements of society that others avoided.

"Basie's band really built theirs [their reputation] up on socializing . . . that whole band didn't believe in going out with a stead [respectable] black people. They'd head straight for pimps and prostitutes . . . they'd hang out with them. And those people were great advertisement for Basie . . . but they said Andy Kirk [leader of The Clouds of Joy] was too uppity."

Basie trombonist Dicky Wells was one of many who recalled the affective ties in the jazz world and claimed the character of the Basie and Ellington bands extended to the larger jazz community:

"through the ups and downs of life, there's no greater bunch of big, fat-hearted people on God's earth, because I knew of no other profession that requires the expression of happiness at all times."

Or as saxophonist Eddie Barefield, who played with the Benny Moten and Cab Calloway bands, reminisced: "It's been just like I have a million friends, and they're scattered every place, all in . . . [the] music business."

The friendships and bonds of affection were so strong that they extended beyond racial barriers, creating an interracial jazz community as well as an international fraternity. White musicians were attracted by the brotherhood. Band leader Artie Shaw noted that he became even more convinced that his friendships with black musicians and singers were genuine and true as he grew older:

"Throughout the years, every time I have run into one of them, there has been that strange and subtle bond between us, that deep feeling of mutual understanding . . . and the kind of friendship nobody can ever have too much of in this present world we all have to try to live in together."

Mezz Mezzrow, a white clarinetist, made similar observations about the jazz community in his autobiography, *Really the Blues*.

In addition to serving the functions of families and fraternal organizations, these bands were schools. Through jazz organizations such as the swing band, African Americans acquired greater skill in their professions, indeed, but they also learned about

proper dress, manners, deportment, and those social skills essential for prosperity in a variety of different contexts and before white elites as well as popular audiences.

Dance bands set examples as models of dress and deportment in the eastern cities as we might expect, but also in the burgeoning southwestern cities during the 1920s and 1930s. Bank leader Alphonso Trent's unit played in the elite Adolphus Hotel in downtown Dallas. One young musician who heard the band on the radio, saxophonist Budd Johnson, maintained that Trent's musicians "were like the Duke Ellington of that time, . . . these guys really inspired us. . . . All of this was really a school." Buddy Tate recalled a similar effect when the Trent band boarded for a time with his aunt in Texas. The teenage tenor player saw their band uniforms hanging in the closet: "That really turned me on . . . and they was sharp, man." Soon as his band could afford them, they bought their own uniforms, and Tate explained, "We got that from Trent . . . We [was] sharp."

Basie trumpeter Buck Clayton recalled that band members' stylish dress while visiting Parsons, Kansas, Clayton's home town, helped him decided to become a musician. "One of the reasons I started playing music was because . . . I admired the way George E. Lee's band [dressed] . . . coal black, charcoal . . . oxford gray . . . coats. Nice cut. They had pearl gray vests and black and white tie and gambler-stripe pants and patent leather shoes." By imitating their dress and deportment, an acolyte's social circle enlarged. Clayton explained how musicians were invited into the homes of lawyers and doctors. This was because "you carried yourself right and you dressed [right]. Clayton added: "So that's one of the reasons I wanted to be a musician."



By observing their heroes in the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas or at the Grimm Hotel in St. Louis, young musicians eventually acquired the manners and deportment they needed. Saxophonist Hayes Pillars played at the Grimm Hotel before the city's wealthiest citizens and years later explained:

"this is where I first learned of the dignity of the bandstand, and how it should be conducted when you're playing dinner music and when you're playing for luncheons and things . . . soft music . . . we weren't allowed to talk . . . [so] the patrons . . . could sit and converse and enjoy their food, and enjoy the musical background."

As a result of their jobs in exclusive settings and because older, knowledgeable musicians schooled younger ones as if they were brothers or sisters, the swing bands held considerable appeal for youth who wished to have the appearance as well as the essence of prosperity and success. Pianist Mary Lou Williams was impressed by the deportment of Andy Kirk's sidemen when she played in the band during the 1930s. "The boys were the most handsome guys and the most wonderful gentlemen that I've ever met . . . they were so well trained . . . and . . . dressed very fine and they were so respectful of people."

Jazz bands' familial character sometimes reasserted itself in actual family units as musicians grew older and settled down to a semi-retired existence. Willis H. Young, father of Lester Young, was such an individual, but so were Major N. Clark Smith and W. C. Handy. Willis Young settled in Los



James Van Der Zee.
Seventh Avenue and
West 138th St., 1927.

Angeles at the end of the 1920s, after three or four decades of touring, and he combined his roles as grandparent, head of the household, and music teacher in a fashion that sheds light on what Ellington earlier referred to as the "business venture" aspect of organized units.

One of the grandchildren who grew up under his tutelage explained that the extended family of Youngs never really suffered during the Depression. The ever resourceful Willis Young taught music to grandchildren in his household and to students in the neighborhood, and prepared them for a life in music by conducting their performances in churches and at various community assemblies. He also led a band from the black union local in the city's Labor Day parades. While not rich, he managed to have enough money to maintain his family and to add several new members, his retired sister and then his grandchildren.

The aged band leader also managed to include children from the neighborhood at his dinner table during the Depression. One of his grandchildren recalled that Poppa Young "was a manipulator as far as music was concerned and the money." Another member of the household reminisced: "we never felt [the effects of the Depression] stomach-wise, because there was always something on the table." At that time "a lot of people were in the bread lines . . . [but] we always had something to eat." The grandmother prepared dishes of "greens, hamhocks, neckbones, chicken, sweet potato pies, lemon pies, [and] peach cobbles." During hard times she cooked "the best skins you ever had in your life" or boiled skins with red beans and rice.

Knowing of Willis Young's favorite dishes as well as his sweet tooth, people in the neighborhood would exchange "a six-layer cake if they didn't have the money" for music lessons for a member of their family. In this respect, Willis Young was like a "country doctor, by that meaning they all knew Papa" on South Central Avenue and in the environs surrounding the musician's union, which was located next door to the Youngs. Willis Young spent his last years in this community before passing in 1943. Other former band leaders such as Major N. Clark Smith, after a life of touring, taught youth in the high schools of Chicago and Kansas City, playing a useful role in the black communities by instilling in their pupils the discipline and knowledge of several generations.

Thus the dance band business contributed to the cultural and social education as well as to the vocational side of a people for whom many other economic and cultural avenues were closed. Proscribed by racial barriers and limited by poverty, therefore unable to attend high school or college, or to play in symphony orchestras, or to rise in white society, African Americans found ways of overcoming all this. By mastering the music as well as the manners of different ethnic groups and social classes, they managed not only to survive, but to create avenues to a greater measure of success and prosperity than they were meant to enjoy in a racist nation where wealth and happiness was thought to be the exclusive monopoly of a small and powerful elite.

DOUGLAS H. DANIELS is a Professor in the Department of Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

HARLEM RENAISSANCE: A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

POLITICS AND SOCIAL EVENTS

- 1880 Elevated rapid transit train lines are extended into uptown Manhattan.
- 1905 Real estate slump creates development boom in Harlem: between 1905 and 1925 undervalued properties are rented to black tenants. By 1925 there are as many as 200,000 African Americans living in Harlem.
- 1910 NAACP founded. W. E. B. Du Bois is made editor of NAACP monthly journal, *The Crisis*.
- 1910-1920 A mass migration of African Americans brought thousands of people from the south to the industrial centers of the northeast.
- 1911-1914 Black churches, social clubs, and political organizations relocate to Harlem in large numbers.
- 1916 Marcus Garvey speaks to crowds at the "Speaker's Corner" at Lenox Avenue and 135th Street.
- 1918 UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) incorporated.
- 1918 End of World War I.
- 1919 The men of the Fifteenth Regiment of New York's National Guard parade up Fifth Avenue to Harlem.
- 1919 Race riots erupt throughout the country.
- 1920 Volstead Act. Beginning of Prohibition. By 1922 there were over 5,000 speakeasies operating in Manhattan.
- 1920 James Weldon Johnson becomes Executive Secretary of NAACP.
- 1920 Throughout the 1920s Julius Rosenwald and other Jewish philanthropists work in partnership with Harlem leaders to support African-American social causes.
- 1922 James Weldon Johnson becomes editor of Urban League's magazine, *Opportunity*. His editorial agenda is the promotion of African American arts achievements as a means to social change.
- 1922 Harvard University instituted and then rescinded a ban on African Americans in dormitories.
- 1924 Lt. Hubert Julian, "The Black Eagle," attempts trans-Atlantic flight.
- 1926 Mordecai Johnson is first African American president of Howard University.

- 1930s With the Great Depression and the end of prohibition the Harlem Renaissance approached its end.
- 1931 Walter White becomes executive head of NAACP.
- 1934 W. E. B. Du Bois leaves the NAACP.
- 1935 Riot in Harlem leaves 3 dead, 30 hospitalized, over 100 jailed and \$2 million in property loss.

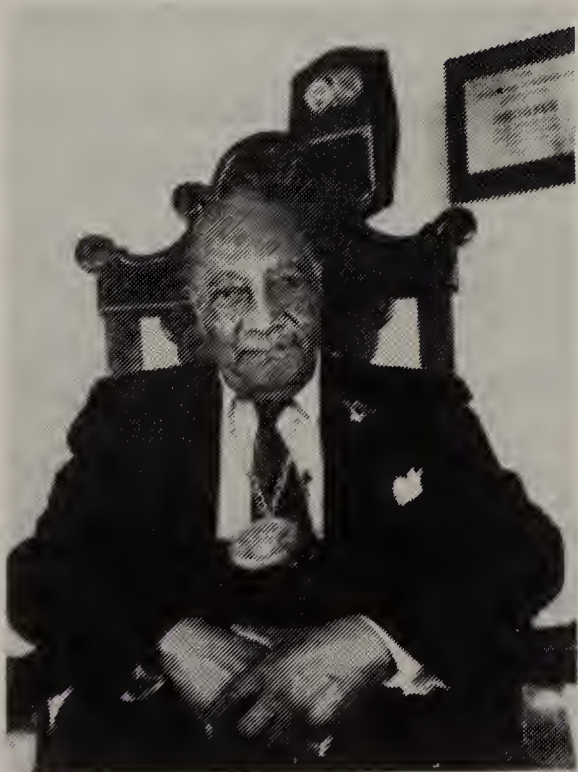
MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS

- 1880s Ragtime evolves as a separate musical style from the minstrel shows of the nineteenth century.
- 1894 "Black America:" First all-black show on Broadway. During the period 1890 to 1910 African-American writers, composers, and performers contributed to the evolution of a new art form: the Broadway musical.
- 1889 Oscar Hammerstein opens the Harlem Opera House.
- 1903 "Tin Pan Alley" emerges in the Union Square area, sees its heyday in the 'teens with songwriters Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, George Gershwin and Andy Razaf.
- 1905 The "Nashville Students' Orchestra" presents the first concert of syncopated music in America, at Carnegie Hall.
- 1907 Ziegfield Follies opens.
- 1913 Broadway emerges as New York's primary theater district.
- 1917 "Darktown Strutters' Ball," the first jazz recording in New York, recorded by Nick LaRocca's Original Dixieland Jazz Band.
- 1920 Mamie Smith's recording of "Crazy Blues."
- 1921 "Shuffle Along" opens on Broadway. (First Broadway musical entirely composed, directed, choreographed, and produced by African Americans.)
- 1921 The first white Harlem nightclub, "The Shuffle Inn," opens in the basement of the Lafayette Theatre.
- 1922 The Cotton Club opens in Harlem.
- 1923 Formation of the Colored Cabaret Owners Association.
- 1923 Connie's Inn opens.
- 1923-1930 Fletcher Henderson's orchestra performs at Roseland, featuring Louis Armstrong.

- 1925 Fats Waller is house pianist at Connie's Inn.
- 1927 Duke Ellington begins an engagement at the Cotton Club.
- 1929 "Connie's Hot Chocolates," opens at the Hudson Theater, and features the songs of Andy Razaf and Fats Waller, such as "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Black and Blue."
- 1929 Waller/Razaf's "Honeysuckle Rose."

LITERATURE

- 1921 *The Crisis* publishes Langston Hughes' *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*.
- 1923 Jean Toomer's *Cane* published.
- 1924 Walter White's *Fire in the Flint* published.
- 1924 *Color* (Countee Cullen's first volume of poetry) is published.
- 1924 Langston Hughes in Paris.
- 1924 Charles Johnson convenes a young writers' group at the Civic Club.
- 1925 *Opportunity* awards prizes for literature. (Winners include Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston)
- 1926 Langston Hughes' *The Weary Blues*.
- 1925 Alain Locke: *The New Negro*, an anthology of poetry and prose from the *Opportunity* contest.



James Van Der Zee.

HUMANITIES WEST BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR HARLEM RENAISSANCE

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COMING HUMANITIES WEST PROGRAMS

RENAISSANCE WOMEN: *Courtly Power and Influence*
May 17–19, 1996

In his famous study, *The Civilization of the Renaissance* (1860), Jacob Burckhardt wrote that “to understand the higher forms of social intercourse in this period, we must keep before our minds the fact that women stood on a footing of perfect equality with men.” From our perspective today, we know that this was hardly the case. In fact, Renaissance texts often dramatize the profound social inequalities between men and women, both in the rhetoric of praise used for learned ladies and in the actual programs of study recommended for girls. And yet in the work of contemporary scholars, women of all classes are emerging from the archives, and certain minor figures demand almost as much attention as great historical personalities such as Elizabeth I, Catherine de Medici and Isabella d’Este.

The Renaissance, a pivotal period in the history of Western Europe, witnessed the gradual and uneven transition from feudalism to capitalism. Along with economic change came, large, centrally administered states emerged, often ruled by powerful women. Concurrently, significant changes in family structure affected the role of women in society. This program will bring together some of the finest scholars now studying and re-evaluating the Renaissance in this light. Through them, we can perhaps develop a fuller and more accurate understanding of the sources of our current socio-economic system.

FIN DE SIÈCLE VIENNA: *Nostalgia and the Modern*
October 18–19, 1996

THE LIGHT OF SCANDINAVIA: *Art and Culture in a Free Society*
March 28–29, 1997

TOWERING VISIONS: *Jerusalem Through the Ages*
May 30–31, 1997

HUMANITIES WEST

Since 1983 HUMANITIES WEST has been "exploring history to celebrate the mind and the arts." It presents interdisciplinary programs which evoke historic times and places that illuminate the human spirit. Designed to entertain and educate diverse audiences, these programs offer a lively combination of wide-ranging lectures and performances that encompass the fine arts, social history, music, politics and philosophy of the arts. The programs presented by Humanities West over the last decade have included *The Golden Age of Venice*, *Saint Petersburg: Cultural Diversity in Imperial Russia*; *Manet's Paris: the First Modern City*; and *The Glory of the Ottoman Empire: Suleyman the Magnificent*. For further information on Humanities West call 415/391-9700.

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Carl Van Vechten. Bessie Smith
"Empress of the Blues." 1936.

Humanities West News

« exploring history to celebrate the mind and the arts »

Winter, 1995-1996

Harlem Renaissance: New York in the Twenties

Harlem Renaissance taps into the engaging, warm, sometimes angry, always deeply human world of black American literature, art and music. If you are not already familiar with the extraordinary writings in the bibliography for this next Humanities West program, a remarkable heritage of literature awaits your discovery. Jubilant jazz and soulful blues enrich the mixture.

A remarkable flowering of African American arts and letters took place in New York City's Harlem during the decade of the 1920s. A kind of black capital, Harlem's excellent housing, its prestige, excitement and cosmopolitan flavor attracted a prosperous and stylish black middle class from which sprang an extraordinary artistic center. Never before had so many African Americans produced so much literary, artistic and scholarly material in such a short time.

Although not usually militant, participants in the Harlem Renaissance were intensely race conscious, proud of their heritage and of being black.



If you seek one book of introduction, *Having Our Say* will lure you in. Excerpts from the book are on page 4.

Their Eyes Were Watching God is a second book which will capture your heart. **Zora Neale Hurston** created this masterpiece which has inspired a new generation of black women writers, including Nobel Prize winner **Toni Morrison**. The story of a poor young woman who longs for an expansive life she only senses is possible, because she cannot see it anywhere within her cramped existence, this story takes the reader through her life with three very different men in the Deep South.

Toni Morrison's *Jazz* takes the reader into New York in the twenties through melodic descriptions of the sounds, scents, and sights of Harlem and stories of love, struggle and the intertwined lives of its residents.

All three of these books are available in paperback, as are most of the books in the bibliography.

FRIDAY RECEPTION FOR FRIENDS AND THEIR GUESTS follows "TEN YEARS AT THE COTTON CLUB"

Friday evening's program, on February 9, includes a recreation of the some of the breathtaking jazz and blues which brought Harlem to the attention of the entire country and made it a mecca for glamorous New Yorkers. **Bill Bell** directs a jazz ensemble which recreates the music of **Duke Ellington**, followed by a blues soloist singing **Bessie Smith** classics.

Afterwards, the festivity continues for Friends of Humanities West and their guests, who are invited to a reception in the Green Room of the Veterans Memorial Building, across the hall from Herbst Theatre.

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS with BELVA DAVIS Moderating

The social and political forces which led to the flowering of black literature and art will be explored by **Donna Akiba Sullivan Harper** of Spelman College on Friday evening. This program is partially underwritten by local chapters of Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

Belva Davis, of KRON and KQED, moderates Saturday's program. **Douglas Daniels**, of U.C. Santa Barbara, discusses the precursors of the Harlem Renaissance. The international context, and in particular the mingling of ideologies and social movements among peoples from the

American South, the West Indies, and Africa, will be probed for the light it sheds on cultural developments in Harlem.

Black artists of the period are the topic of an illustrated talk by **Richard Powell** of Duke University.

A musical performance begins Saturday afternoon's program, followed by **Olly Wilson**, Chairman of the Department of Music at U.C. Berkeley, speaking on the role of music in the artistic life of the Harlem Renaissance.

Barbara Christian, of U.C. Berkeley, speaks on the rich literary tradition of Harlem writers.

FRIENDS ACTIVITIES

Reading Group

You are cordially invited to come to a reading group discussion of Toni Morrison's *Jazz*. Join us at the Humanities West office where the discussion will take place on Tuesday, January 23, at 5:30 pm. at 660 Market Street, Suite 202. We are located across from the Palace Hotel, one-half block from the Montgomery Street BART station.

Special Humanities West Night on the Town: Blues in North Beach

Humanities West invites you to a no-host evening of music from the Harlem Renaissance with vocalist **Daria Nile** at **Enrico's** on Broadway on Tuesday, January 30. For more information and reservations, call HW at 391-9700.

Free Pre-Program Reading and Performance

Poetry and music comprise our free pre-program event for the Harlem program. Readings by Ayanna from the writings of Zora Neale Hurston and the poetry of Langston Hughes will be followed by songs of the Twenties by Marijo to make this a very special evening. Join us at the Firehouse at Fort Mason on Thursday, January 25, at 7:30 pm. Call 415/391-9700 to reserve a place.

William H. Johnson. SELF
PORTRAIT. c. 1935-38.
Woodcut, relief print. 9 x 9".



IN REVIEW: HW Friends Activities 1995

In addition to free pre-programs at Fort Mason and dinners and lunches during the program weekend, Humanities West has offered a variety of activities over the past year to Friends and Patrons to provide opportunities to socialize and to enhance your enjoyment of our programs:

- Irish Pub Night, March 1995
- Grace Cathedral Docent Tour, May 1995
- SFMOMA Docent Tour, September 1995
- Reading Group on "Matisse & North Africa," October 1995

Fellows and Patrons of Humanities West have enjoyed receptions given by the Consuls General of Ireland and France, a special evening reception and talk comparing Gothic and modern architecture, as well as a reception to taste the wines of Provence. We thank all of you for your support, encourage you to continue to give generously, and urge you to invite your friends to join the Friends of Humanities West!

Letter from the Executive Director

Season's Greetings!

I would like to thank all of you who take the time to fill out our audience surveys at Humanities West's programs. Your comments help us in our efforts to make each program educational, entertaining, and well produced.

As you know, Humanities West selects lecturers who are distinguished in their fields, with experience speaking to large symposia. In correspondence and conversation with our speakers, we emphasize that you appreciate a lively presentation, colorful slides and music, and especially dislike lectures which are read from scholarly papers.

Friday afternoon before each program the speakers have a technical rehearsal at Herbst Theatre. The backstage crew, the speakers and I make sure the slides, musical tapes and other audiovisual aids are in order and that the backstage assistants know the cues. We adjust the sound levels and I coach the scholars to speak into the microphone and not talk too fast! Musicians also rehearse.

We constantly seek ways to improve acoustics. Moving the podium to the center seems to have helped (although when the theater was full Saturday for "Provence" some of you complained that you could not see.) The sound system frequently has to be adjusted at the beginning of a program because a full theater absorbs sound differently than the empty theater during rehearsal. We rent additional audio speakers for the balcony.

We try to keep an eye on other details, and have added coffee service on Saturday mornings at your request. So please do keep us informed about what you most enjoy and changes you would like to see.

"Harlem Renaissance: New York in the Twenties" February 9 and 10, 1996, promises to be exciting and vibrant with music, art and literature. I have enjoyed many of the books which are on the reading list, and look forward to the lectures and a very special Friday evening of jazz and blues. Bring a friend, and I'll see you in February.

Nancy Buffum
Executive Director

1996 Programs

May 17, 18, 19, 1996

RENAISSANCE WOMEN: Courtly Power and Influence

October 18 and 19, 1996

FIN DE SIÈCLE VIENNA: Nostalgia and the Modern

March 28 and 29, 1997

IN THE SCANDINAVIAN SPIRIT:
Art and Culture in a Free Society

May 30 and 31, 1997

TOWERING VISIONS: Jerusalem Through the Ages

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- Hurston, Zora Neale, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Harper Collins, paperback, 1991.
- Powell, Richard J., *Homecoming, the Art and Life of William H. Johnson*, W. W. Norton, paperback, 1993.
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- McKay, Claude, *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*.
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- Toomer, Jean, *Cane*, W. W. Norton, paperback, 1993.

Having Our Say

The following are excerpts from *Having Our Say*, by Sarah and A. Elizabeth Delany, with Amy Hill Hearth, published by Kodansha America, Inc., New York, 1993, and Bantam Books in paperback, 1994. Bessie and Sadie Delany, two sisters in their 100s, (Bessie died in 1995) recount the stories of their long and rich lives in North Carolina and Harlem.

SADIE

Bessie and I have been together since time began, or so it seems. Bessie is my little sister, only she's not so little. She is 101 years old, and I am 103.

Neither one of us ever married and we've lived together most all of our lives, and probably know each other better than any two human beings on this Earth.

We were in the helping professions—Bessie was a dentist and I was a high school teacher—so we're not rich, but we get by. Papa always taught us that with every dollar you earn, the first ten cents goes to the Lord, the second goes in the bank for hard times, and the rest is yours, but you better spend it wisely. Well, it's a good thing we listened because we're living on that hard-time money now, and not doing too badly.

BESSIE

What worries me is that I know Sadie's going to get into Heaven, but I'm not so sure about me. I'm working on it, but it sure is hard to change. I'm afraid when I meet St. Peter at the Gate, he'll say, "Lord, child, you were *mean!*"

I remember things that happened long, long ago that still make me madder than a hornet. I wish they didn't. Most of the things that make me mad happened to me because I am colored. As a woman dentist, I faced sexual harassment—that's what they call it today—but to me, racism was always a bigger problem.

Sometimes I am angry at all white people, until I stop and think of the nice white people I have known in my life. OK, OK, there have been a few. I admit it. And my mother is part white, and I can't hate my own flesh and blood! There are good white people out there.

SADIE

Harlem, and all of New York, for that matter, was a happier place then. It was much safer. I used to walk through the parks without any trouble, and you didn't have to worry about somebody shooting at you. Still, it was a meaner place than Raleigh.

I was very happy at Columbia. Bessie had a harder time there, when she enrolled in the dental school in 1919. I did not encounter as much prejudice. Maybe it was because I was less noticeable; I was lighter. Or maybe it was because I was quieter. Maybe it was easier to accept a colored woman studying to be a teacher than learning to be a dentist.

BESSIE

Hap [her brother] was four years younger than me but he was already finishing school and starting his practice by the time I got to dental school. When I graduated, he invited me to share an office with him and another dentist, Dr. Chester Booth, at

2305 Seventh Avenue—that's the corner of Seventh Avenue and 135th Street. This was the center of Harlem! From the office window you could see everything that was going on. Harlem was like a beehive, with people running every which way, going to work, school, or to entertainment. It was a positive place.

Not all the patients were poor. Hap and I had separate practices, and he had a large number of famous people, such as Walter White of the NAACP and entertainers like Bojangles Robinson and Alberta Hunter, who was one of the nicest women I ever knew. But some of Hap's jazz friends were annoying because they always wanted to use the phone. I still remember the number. It was the most well-used phone in Harlem! Once, the bill was \$100 and I nearly fainted dead on the floor. That was a lot of money in those days and those jazz folks never did chip in to pay us back, even though they had more cash than anybody. So you know what I did? I went and had a pay phone put in.

SADIE

One thing that happened to a lot of colored folks when they moved to Harlem was that they got a little too big for their britches. They thought they'd got to be important by living in Harlem. When they'd go back to visit their folks in the South, the men acted like dudes, and the women acted like they thought they were the Queen of Ethiopia.

Well, I guess we thought we were a little special too, but Mama and Papa kept us in line. The first time I went home, I said "Darn" in front of my Mama and she gave me a piece of her mind. She said, "Is that what you've learned, up there in New York? You've learned how to swear?" She shamed me good. I never swore again.

Well, we heard a few racy words in Harlem, child. Harlem was the playground for the rich. You couldn't help but run into flashy Negroes and high-living white folks. From 1920 to 1933, Prohibition was going on, and you couldn't drink legally, but that didn't stop anybody.

Being good girls, Bessie and I did not venture too far into the jazz scene. After all, we were Bishop Delany's daughters. Once Bessie went to the Cotton Club, which was hard to do because they had colored performers but it was a white folks' club. Bessie got in, because she had a beau who worked there.

Over the years, through friends or through Hubert, we met entertainers like Ethel Waters, Bert Williams, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, and Lena Horne. We were acquainted with these people, but our circle of close friends was the professional class. For example, one of the frequent guests at our home was Mr. William Kelly, the editor of the *Amsterdam News*, which was a very influential Negro newspaper that is still published in New York today.

Mr. Kelly never passed up an invitation for our cooking. He used to say he felt right at home, except for one thing. He said he never saw anything like the way we Delanys always cleaned our plates. We used to laugh and tell him "If you'd grown up in a family of ten children that had no money, you'd be in the habit of cleaning your plate, too."



A RETURN TO OLD FAVORITES FOR THE
SPEAKERS' DINNER
AND FRIENDS LUNCHEON

Sponsors, Patrons and Fellows of Humanities West are invited to join our Harlem speakers for dinner before the Friday program at **Hayes Street Grill**. The restaurant is a short walk from Herbst Theatre, at 324 Hayes Street.

New selections from the delicious menu at **Ivy's** will be the order of the day for our Saturday luncheon. Friends of Humanities West are cordially invited to join us there, on Saturday, February 10, between the morning and afternoon sessions of the program. Ivy's is at 398 Hayes Street. Guests will have a chance to share a table and break bread with fellow humanities lovers and speakers.

SPEAKERS' DINNER and FRIENDS LUNCHEON

Reservations Form for the HARLEM program,
February 9 and 10, 1996.

Yes, I am a Sponsor, Patron or Fellow of Humanities West and would like to attend the Speakers' Dinner.

Please reserve _____ place(s) in my name for dinner Friday night, February 9, at **Hayes Street Grill**, 324 Hayes Street. Enclosed is my check, payable to Humanities West, for \$50 per person.

Yes, I am a Friend of Humanities West and would like to attend the Friends Luncheon.

Please reserve _____ place(s) in my name for luncheon at **Ivy's** on Saturday, February 10. Enclosed is a check, payable to Humanities West, for \$35 per person.

A letter of confirmation will be sent approximately two weeks prior to the event.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

TELEPHONE

Please return this form to Humanities West, 660 Market Street, Suite 202, San Francisco, CA 94104. Telephone: 415/391-9700.

WISH LIST: HW WANTS TO TRAVEL
THE INFORMATION SUPER HIGHWAY

We would like to be able to utilize the "Information Super Highway" to promote programs, publish information, and communicate with our audience and with other humanities organizations. Call 391-9700 if you have access to up-to-date computer equipment that might be donated: hard drive, monitor, or modems.



Aaron Douglas. *Play De Blues*, for "Misery" by
Langston Hughes, in *Opportunity*, October 1926.

COFFEE SERVED SATURDAY
MORNING AT HERBST

Coffee will be available in the downstairs cafe at Herbst Theatre on the Saturday morning of our programs. Cost is \$1.50 per cup. The theatre doors will open at 9:15 to accommodate this new service which is underwritten for our subscribers by Humanities West.

"Harlem Renaissance" Priority Ticket Order Form

PLEASE ORDER YOUR TICKETS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
DONORS WILL RECEIVE PRIORITY UNTIL **January 1**.

NOTE: Please include a *self-addressed, stamped envelope* and mail to City Box Office with your order. Tickets will be mailed approximately 4 weeks prior to the program.

Friday evening, February 9, 1996, 8:00 pm-10:15 pm.
Herbst Theatre with reception following in the Green Room

Donor _____ @ \$27 (includes reception) _____
Student _____ @ \$15 _____

Saturday, February 10, 1996, 10:00 am-4:00 pm.
Herbst Theatre

Donor _____ @ \$15 _____
Student _____ @ \$15 _____

Handling Charge \$1 per ticket

Total Enclosed:

NOTE: Tickets are non-refundable. Luncheon is not included.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

DAYTIME TELEPHONE

Send this form and make checks payable to:

City Box Office
153 Kearny Street, Suite 402
San Francisco, CA 94108

FOR INFORMATION, CALL CITY BOX OFFICE 415/392-4400

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

Events which will enrich your enjoyment of the coming Harlem Renaissance program:

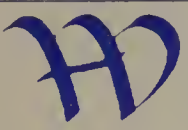
- Reading group: Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, January 23.
- Poetry and music at The Firehouse, January 25.
- Blues in North Beach, Enrico's, January 30.
- Doe Library, U.C. Berkeley: "From the Streets to the Campus; From the Campus to the World: African Diaspora Studies at U.C. Berkeley. February through March, 1996.
- Oakland Museum: William Henry Johnson Exhibit begins February 8, 1996.
- The African-American Historical Society will host a poetry festival and video screenings at 762 Fulton Street, San Francisco, in February. For more information call 415/292-6172.
- Photography exhibit "Portraits in Black" 1880s to 1920 by Sam Waller, African American Historical Society Gallery, Fort Mason Building C, February 1-29, 1996.

Oakland Museum Exhibit Features Black Artist WILLIAM HENRY JOHNSON

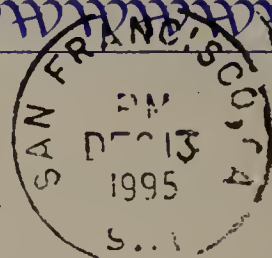
Twenty-two paintings of William Henry Johnson will be displayed at the Oakland Museum beginning February 8, 1996. These paintings have been selected from the Museum's permanent collection and were obtained from the National Museum of American Art in the early 1970s.

William H. Johnson was born in Florence, South Carolina, in 1901, and after attending the National Academy of Design in New York, he left for France in 1926. There he met expatriate African American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner. After many years in Europe, Johnson returned to New York in 1938, where he joined the WPA Federal Art Project and taught painting in the Harlem Community Art Center.

Johnson's career spanned a gamut of styles from the academic, through Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, and German Expressionism, to finally, a "conscious naivete." He is considered one of the most important African American artists of his generation which encompassed the artistic flowering in Harlem during the period of the Harlem Renaissance. He is among the major African American expatriates who found artistic freedom and public recognition abroad, especially in France and northern Europe.



Humanities West
660 Market Street, Suite 202
San Francisco, CA 94104



Elaine Thornburgh
580 Funston
San Francisco, CA 94118